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ABSTRACT

Four staff recommendations are presented for the consideration of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges, concerning the provision of remediation in the community colleges. After section I provides background on the issues that have been raised regarding remediation at the college level, section II reviews the board's policies and actions concerning the subject to date, concluding that the board should develop a policy concerning the establishment of an "academic skills floor" for community college remedial programs. Section III introduces a proposal for the development of policies responsive to the "floor issue," setting out four premises for the subsequent recommendations and data which illuminate the likely effects of establishing a floor. Finally, the report includes the following recommendations: (1) community colleges should continue to be regarded in state policy as the primary postsecondary providers of remedial instruction and services; (2) students who fail to meet satisfactory progress standards should be dismissed; (3) community colleges should provide for the full range of remedial instruction needed to correct the skills deficiencies exhibited by students who enroll; and (4) the Board should reiterate its earlier call for a joint comparative study of remediation in the credit mode in community colleges and in adult, noncredit programs under the auspices of high school and community college districts. The recommendations and their implications are discussed. (LAL)

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Board of Governors of the
California Community Colleges
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Item 3

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Summary

This item proposes that the Board "approve in concept" four staff recommendations concerning the provision of remediation in the community colleges. Specifically, these recommendations would establish the role of remediation in providing access to the institutions and to their programs, respectively. The recommendations would have the effect of limiting the amount of remediation a student could take to earn eligibility for degree and certificate courses and programs.

Section I provides background on the issues that have been raised regarding remediation in the colleges, and Section II reviews Board policy and actions concerning the subject to date. It concludes with the suggestion that, while prior Board actions have been responsive and appropriate, there remains a need for the Board to develop policy that is responsive to the suggestion that there be an "academic skills floor" for community college remedial programs.

Section III introduces staff's proposal for developing policy that is responsive to the "floor" issue. It sets out four premises for the subsequent recommendations and elaborates in detail the dual concepts of "open access to the institution" and "conditional access to degree and certificate courses and programs." Data are presented which illuminate the likely effects of establishing a floor. The four specific recommendations are presented for the Board to approve "in concept" in order to permit the Board to establish a clear policy direction but also permit full deliberation and resolution of several implementation issues.

1. **Background**

The best and most recent research and writing on the subject of remediation acknowledges that postsecondary institutions have always found it necessary to offer some amount of instruction that was "pre-college" in level or content, and that was designed to build the language and computational skills of admitted students to a level that would enable them to succeed in college programs. Over the past 15 years, however, the expansion of these "remedial" offerings -- both in enrollments and in scope or levels of curriculum -- has been dramatic in postsecondary institutions throughout the country; and that expansion has become the object of major concern in both educational and public policy circles.

The research also leaves little doubt that the need to remediate the skill deficiencies of adult Americans is real and widespread (see May 1985 Board Agenda item). Most often noted among the factors contributing to this need are:

1. increasing proportions of underprepared high school graduates (resulting from a decade or more of lax standards in the high schools as well as from other, less easily measurable societal forces); and

2. increasing enrollment, in vocational and special programs, of adults, many of whom did not complete high school or who have been away from formal schooling for some time.

3. In addition: major influxes of immigrants and refugees include many persons who are in need of instruction in English as a Second Language (ESL), either prior to or concurrent with instruction in remedial level courses, in order to adjust to a new, cultural environment.

What is controversial, as a matter of educational and public policy, is not whether there is a great need for remediation among adults, but rather how that need is to be met; and particularly, what is the necessary and/or appropriate role for collegiate institutions to play in meeting the need.

In California, as in other states, the need for remediation has created an expansion of remedial instruction and services in all postsecondary segments; but it is the community colleges and adult schools (the latter under auspices of either high school or community college districts) that have assumed responsibility for by far the greatest numbers of remedial enrollees and the greatest scope of remedial offerings. In the absence of any coherent State or segmental policy during the period of expansion, the community colleges adopted their own definitions and standards applicable to remediation. The options available to college districts that have local responsibility for noncredit, adult programs were even greater than for those that do not. In any case, the resulting diversity gave rise to other, second-level policy issues beyond the simple question of whether they ought to be in the business in the first place. Examples of such issues include:

1. What is the appropriate delineation between what is remedial and what is college level?

2. Should credit be granted for remedial course-work? If so, should it be applicable to Associate degrees? To transfer credit? (NOTE: The University's and State University's policies throughout the period did little to provide direction for a coherent state policy.)

In 1983, the California Postsecondary Education Commission issued a report of a comprehensive study of remediation in California's public colleges and universities, Promises to Keep, which addressed these issues and added another:

3. Is there a skill deficiency level (i.e., a "floor") below which colleges -- even community colleges -- should not attempt to provide remediation?

As these issues have risen to prominence, the Board of Governors and local districts have taken a number of steps toward establishing coherent public policy concerning remediation. Even so, the current deliberations of the legislatively-mandated Commission for Review of the Master Plan for Higher Education and the Joint Legislative Committee on the Master Plan have focused on the phenomenon of remediation in the postsecondary segments as if there were a need to start "from scratch." And they have, at least implicitly, challenged the adequacy and completeness of existing Board policies for resolving what they have identified as the major issues concerning remediation. This fact gives a sense of urgency to the need to review existing Board policies in the area and to consider whether the Board should revise or extend its existing policies.

II. Existing State and Board of Governors' Policies

Public documents on community colleges in California at least as far back as the 1947 "Strayer Report" to the Legislature include remedial instruction as a function in the colleges' mission. The Education Code contains no explicit directive for the colleges to provide remediation in the credit mode, but the "permissive" nature of that Code in California allowed colleges to mount such remedial offerings. The Code does specify "adult basic and secondary education" as one of the nine categories of instruction that may be offered and funded by the State in the noncredit mode. At the same time, Title 5 of the the Administrative Code contains many references to remedial or "compensatory" education which appear to correctly assume its existence in the colleges in both credit and noncredit programs (e.g., the Course Classification System).

In December 1983, the Board of Governors adopted a statement of "Statewide Mission" for community colleges which listed and prioritized the functions within the mission as viewed from the State level by the Board. In that statement, the Board declared explicitly for the first time that colleges "should" provide "remedial and basic skills education," thus designating it not at the same priority level as transfer, vocational education and Associate degrees (for which the operative verb was "will provide"), but, nonetheless, as a major function within the mission.

In May 1985, the Board approved recommendations in two related agenda items, which collectively comprised a major advance in developing a coherent policy concerning remediation as well as responding to the specific issues raised in Promises to Keep. In summary, these Board actions:

1. Declared for the first time as Board policy that the sole purpose for providing remediation in community colleges, when in the credit mode, is "...to assist students to attain those learning skills necessary to succeed in college transfer, certificate or degree courses and programs." This policy prohibits, then, offering remediation for citizenship or "survival skills" alone, except in noncredit. It also implicitly establishes as the standard for evaluating the effectiveness of remedial courses the extent to which students actually do enroll and succeed in college-level courses. To date, however, the Board has chosen to allow colleges the option of offering some remediation in noncredit, even when it is for the purpose stated above;

The Board's May 1985 action also:

2. Established for the first time a uniform, statewide definition of which courses are remedial in community colleges by stating: "Remedial instruction includes courses designed to develop reading or writing skills at or below the level required for enrollment in English courses one level below freshman composition (English 1A), computational skills required in mathematics courses below Algebra and ESL courses at levels consistent with those defined for English";

It further:

3. Prohibited, henceforth, the awarding of degree applicable credit for coursework at the remedial level, as defined in 2. above.

These three actions by the Board significantly delimit the purpose, scope and uses of remedial instruction in community colleges and should, together with existing grading and academic progress regulations, correct much of the confusion of standards that may have resulted from the prior laissez faire policy.

The May 1985 actions of the Board also addressed the proposal, from Promises to Keep, that it should establish an "academic skills floor" below which colleges would not offer remedial instruction, but would, instead, refer students below the floor to noncredit, adult schools. The Board's response to this proposal was deliberate and thoughtful; but it apparently is viewed by some as "sidestepping" or delaying inordinately the difficult question of whether the open access admission policy should be limited to some extent. Specifically, the Board took the position that:

a) given the diversity of communties' needs for remediation, as represented by the offerings in colleges, it is probably not appropriate to establish a uniform, statewide floor; but,

b) even if the concept of a floor is viable, there is currently not sufficient information to determine the level at which it should be set (i.e., there is not enough documentation of how successful colleges are, at the various levels of remediation, in raising students' skills to the point where they can succeed in college-level courses).

Therefore, the Board determined, colleges should be given two to three years to:

c) establish systematic skills assessment and course placement procedures (i.e., matriculation); and

d) evaluate the effectiveness of their remedial courses at each level.

In the meantime:

e) there should be conducted a comparative study of the effectiveness of and purposes for remediation in community colleges and adult schools.

These actions, together, would provide the information necessary to determine whether a "floor" should be established and, if so, at what level. The comparative study would also discern the articulation arrangements that would need to be made, should some shared responsibility be assigned to the two segments.

Staff believes that this position of the Board is logically consistent and educationally sound. It also believes there is additional evidence, not considered previously, which supports the Board's reluctance to prematurely establish a uniform academic floor. At the same time, staff is mindful that the Board's current position -- and especially the two- to three-year timeline for resolution -- is not compelling to those who believe that it is essential to further delimit the scope of remediation in the colleges at this time. Therefore, the next section of this paper presents for discussion alternative proposals to the Board's current position regarding an "academic floor." Staff was advised in the development by an ad hoc group of personnel from colleges identified through the network of the Learning Assessment Retention Consortia (LARC). The proposal retains the "no floor" position, but recommends optional "unit-based," and "student progress based" methods of limiting remediation.

Both approaches would retain the Board's commitment to open access to the institutions but may also satisfy those who want to establish more rigorous limits on remediation. A rationale and some new supporting evidence are provided in the section which follows the proposals.

III. Alternative Proposals for New Board Policies

A. Premises

The recommendations in the following proposals, including the optional implementation strategies, are based on the premises that:

1. Open access to community colleges by all residents 18 years of age or older and able to benefit from the instruction, should be maintained;

2. Access to certificate and degree courses or programs should be conditional, based upon the prerequisite-level skills required for success in the course or program;

3. Priority on institutional resources should be directed toward the support of those students who demonstrate success through maintaining satisfactory academic progress;

4. Colleges should provide the full range of instruction and services required to build the skills of those students who do not meet the prerequisite standards for college-level courses and programs, either under their own auspices or by formal, State-approved, articulation agreements with adult schools.

Premises 1 and 4 support continuation of the existing open access mission of the colleges, insofar as they affirm the colleges' dual responsibilities to: a) admit to the institution all adults who can profit from instruction, and b) provide the range of opportunities needed by those students to gain the skills to succeed in degree and certificate courses and programs.

At the same time, Premises 2 and 3 temper the "full" open access concept by declaring that access to particular programs is conditional upon a) the possession of skills requisite to success, or b) the ability to attain those skills within some reasonable resource limits.

This idea of open access to the institution, but conditional access to its particular programs, while not new to the Board, has particular implictions when it is applied to remediation policies. The sections which follow elaborate some of these implications.

1. Open Access to the Institution

Proponents of open access argue that, in the interests of an enlightened citizenry and productive workforce, community colleges need to provide a "second-chance" opportunity to all adults, regardless of their prior educational attainment or performance.

Critics of open access argue, on the other hand, that unconditional admission is not only a fiscally questionable policy, but also one that jeopardizes the collegiate mission of community colleges by diverting scarce resources to non-collegiate functions or by creating a milieu wherein college-level standards of achievement and excellence are likely to be compromised. Some propose that admission be limited, as it is in many states, to those who have attained high school graduation or its equivalent. This proposal is based on the apparent assumption that graduation signifies the attainment of skill levels that provide a reasonable chance for success in college. In California currently, another method of delimiting open access is based in a proposal, from the Postsecondary Education Commisison, that community colleges should establish an "academic skills floor." That proposal suggests that it is inappropriate for community colleges to offer instruction designed to instill language or computational skills at levels which, historically, would have been expected to be learned prior to entering college. Instead, they should establish an instructional skills floor and refer students with skills below that level (presumably on the basis of an entrance test) to the local adult basic education programs. Although no specific cut-off level for a floor has been specified in documents that propose it, ninth grade level language and computational skills are discussed by many as "reasonable" benchmarks. But limiting open access by requiring ahigh school diploma or ninth grade level skills would, in either case, restrict the range of instructional levels offered by colleges and, therefore, limit open access to the college to those who already possess skills at or above the lowest level of instruction offered. It behooves the Board, then, to ask several questions about the implications of establishing such a floor.

How many current community college students would be affected?

The National Level

Very recently the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) released the results of a national survey in a report titled, "Many College Freshmen Take Remedial Courses."[2] The findings confirm that the widespread provision of remediation in colleges is by no means a phenomenon unique to California. Among the most compelling findings are the following:

1. In 1983-84, 82% of all collegiate institutions offered remedial courses...Overall, public, two-year, and open admission colleges were more likely to offer remedial courses...;

2. On the average...public, two-year and open admission colleges offered about three courses in each remedial subject [i.e., writing, reading and math];

3. Thirty percent (30%) of freshmen in open admission colleges and 28% in two-year colleges enrolled in remedial math courses;

4. "The predominant role of public, two-year, and open admission colleges in remediation is evident...For example, two-year and open admission colleges enrolled slightly less than two-thirds of all freshmen [in the nation] but almost three quarters of the remedial course freshmen."

Even in states that require high school graduation or its equivalent for admission, such as Illinois or New York, the provision of remediation is extensive, in line with the national average statistics cited above. In Illinois, for example, most of the state's community colleges offer two, parallel remedial tracks; one in their noncredit, adult basic education programs for non-high school graduates, and one "not-for-degree-credit" track in the college program for skill-deficient high school graduates. In most colleges, tenth grade level skills are pre-requisite to enrollment in degree and certificate courses, and a majority of colleges find it necessary to provide in their "college track" only those remedial courses that raise student skills from about eighth to tenth grade. But colleges in Illinois' major urban areas, with relatively higher proportion of minority, low-income students, find it necessary to offer the full range (i.e., elementary through high school) in both tracks.

In California

California's open admission policy makes the community colleges available to all adults who can profit from instruction, including both those who have managed to complete high school, even with skill deficiencies, as well as those, recently increasing in number, who dropped out of high school before taking many of the courses which are intended to develop the skills that are usually regarded as pre-requisite to college. Thus, many California colleges also offer a range of remedial courses that includes some at elementary level. The interest of the Master Plan Review Commission in knowing just what levels are offered in each postsecondary segment and what the enrollments are at each led its staff to develop, jointly with the education segments, a "taxonomy" of instructional levels in language and computational skills courses. With the cooperation of a representative sample of twelve community colleges, Chancellor's staff was able to categorize the courses offered at those colleges into the levels of the taxonomy and project from the sample of colleges the statewide enrollments at each level for Fall 1984. Data on Table 1a show these enrollments and the percents they represent of all first-time students in the colleges in Fall 1984. Table 1b shows the percents they comprise of other base enrollment figures.

TABLE 1a
Estimated Numbers of California Community Colleges Students Enrolled at Various Levels of Instruction in English and Mathematics and as Percents of First-Time Student Enrollments,* Fall 1984

Level of Instruction	Descriptions of Level of Student	Examples of Courses		Enrollments and as Percents of First-Time Students	
		Math	English	Math	English
University Level	Students who are college-ready and likely to succeed in the freshman-level courses.	Calculus, Pre-Calculus Analytical Geometry	Freshman Composition (Eng. 1A)	43,674 13.1%	64,224 19.2%
Pre-College or "Spot" Remediation Level	Students who are college-ready except for specific skill deficiencies that require instruction one level below the freshman level in English and/or Math.	Advanced Algebra, Intermediate Algebra, Trigonometry	Subject A or one course below freshman composition (Eng. 1A)	55,355 16.6%	77,000 23.9%
College Preparatory High School Level	Students who are nearly college-ready, but exhibit multiple skill deficiencies that require instruction at two levels below the freshman level in English and/or Math.	Geometry, Elementary Algebra	Courses two levels below freshman composition (Eng. 1A)	63,203 18.9%	59,638 17.9%
High School Diploma Level	Non-college-ready in need of high school level skills in various disciplines (i.e. below college prep. level)	General Math (2 years required; courses not specified)	Paragraphs, sentence structure, reading skills in courses at 9-12 grade level	28,543 8.5%	21,826 6.5%
Junior High Level	Non-high-school ready, in need of junior high school level skills in various disciplines.	Arithmetic (Junior High)	Basic reading and beginning sentence skills in courses at the 7-9 grade level	24,869 7.4%	11,246 3.4%
Elementary Level	In need of elementary level skills in various disciplines	Arithmentic (Elementary)	Above skills but at 6 grade level and below	12,232 3.7%	9,058 1.5%
Developmental/ Basic Living Skills Level	Students operating below elementary level or who need basic life and coping skills	Counting	Most basic English vocabulary and speaking skills	———	2,688 0.7%

(Table format adapted from Master Plan Review Commission draft outline, November 1985)

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TABLE 1b
Fall 1984 California Community College Students Enrolled in Various Levels of Instruction in English and Math as Percents of Three Levels of Base Enrollment

	Total Headcount (N=1,085,599)		Total Enrolled for 6 or More Units (N=619,914)		First-Time Freshmen (N=218,308)	
	English	Math	English	Math	English	Math
University Level	5.9%	4.0%	10.4%	7.1%	29.4%	20.0%
Pre-College A	7.1%	5.1%	12.4%	8.9%	35.3%	25.4%
Pre-College B (College Prep. High School Curriculum)	5.5%	5.8%	9.6%	10.2%	27.3%	29.0%
High School Diploma Level	2.0%	2.6%	3.5%	4.6%	10.0%	13.1%
Junior High Level	1.0%	2.3%	1.8%	4.0%	5.2%	11.4%
Elementary Level	0.8%	1.1%	1.5%	2.0%	4.1%	5.6%
Developmental/ Basic Living Skills	0.2%	N/A	0.4%	N/A	1.0%	N/A
Totals Percent of Base Figure	22.5	20.9	39.6	36.8	112.3	104.5

Table 1a shows the numbers of students enrolled in Fall 1984 at various levels of instruction in English (including reading) courses and mathematics courses; and it also shows the percentages those numbers would comprise of total first-time students.[3] Discounting the more than one-fourth of first-time students not enrolled in an English course and nearly one-third not enrolled in a math course, it can be seen that by far the largest proportion of students are enrolled in courses which cover material that is above the level expected to have been attained by a high school diploma recipient (i.e., not necessarily a "college prep" graduate). But nearly 22,000 or 6.5 percent of the students are enrolled in English courses that cover high school diploma-level skills and more than 20,000 more, or 5.7 percent, are in courses covering junior high or elementary-level concepts. In math, the "less-than-diploma-level" figures are even higher, with 28,543, or 8.5 percent, at the high school level and an additional 37,000, or 11.1 percent, at the junior high and elementary levels. Thus, setting a "floor" in California at the ninth-grade or even the seventh-grade level would eliminate a significant minority of current enrollees.

Who are the students enrolled in remedial coursework?

In California recently, several colleges have used Table 1a's "taxonomy" of instructional levels in English and math, developed in conjunction with the Master Plan Review, to examine the characteristics of students enrolled at various levels. Other colleges have looked at the same question by examining the characteristics of students who score at various levels on their placement tests (presumably, these correspond to the levels of courses the students enroll in as well). Their findings are consistent with trends in states throughout the nation, and in some cases the data provide dramatic confirmation of those trends.

1. A large majority of remedial enrollees are high school graduates or equivalent (71 to 87 percent in the four colleges that examined this factor), but the smaller numbers of non-high school graduates are even more likely to need remediation. Thus, California is like other states in that requiring high school graduation for admission apparently would not eliminate the need for remediation.

2. While significant numbers and proportions of Caucasian students are enrolled in remedial courses (varying with their representation in the colleges), dramatically disproportionate numbers of Hispanics, Asian refugees, and especially Blacks have skill levels that place them into the lower levels of remediation.

   For example, at San Joaquin Delta College, whose ethnic enrollment distribution is nearly identical to statewide totals:

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a) 58 percent of Blacks, 57 percent of Asians, 45 percent of Hispanics, and 17 percent of Caucasians scored below the ninth-grade level in reading;

b) 60 percent of Blacks, 43 percent of Hispanics, and 21 percent of Caucasians had scores that would place them into the lowest levels of math.[4]

At City College of San Francisco:

a) "Whites account for 10% of the students in the lower English levels, but 42% in university level composition courses. The proportion of Blacks enrolled drops from 36% in lower level English classes to about 6% at the university level. The proportion of Hispanics changes from 18% at the junior high level to 7% at the university level. Asians account for about 35-45% of the enrollment in all English categories."

b. [In math,] "The ethnic pattern changes greatly as the level increases. Whites, Hispanics, and especially Blacks become a much smaller proportion of students as the levels increase. Blacks drop from 22% of the junior-high level math students to 3% of the university level math students. Asians account for one in three at the lowest math level and increase to three of four at the university level. The proportion of Chinese students increases from 12% to 48%."[5]

At Sacramento City College:

a. Entering Black students, on the average, had ninth-grade level reading skills; Hispanic students, tenth grade; and Caucasian students, 13th grade.6

<u>What is the likelihood that students who place into remedial course levels will make significant skill gains? Will attain degree level status? Will perform successfully in degree level courses?</u>

Systematic evaluations of the effectiveness of remedial programs for adults, although increasing in number and methodological sophistication, remain few, both in California and the nation. Still, the incidence of favorable findings to date is encouraging.

Kulik et al. synthesized findings from 60 evaluation studies across the nation and concluded that:

"...special college programs for high-risk students have had basically positive effects on students.

> High-risk students who enrolled in such programs stayed in college somewhat longer than control students did, and they received somewhat better grades in regular college work. Although such program effects were statistically reliable, they were fairly small in size in the typical study."[7]

Moving from the national to the system level, the findings are both more clear and more positive. Kaufmann et.al. retrospectively studied the enrollment and performance patterns and demographic characteristics of the 1979 associate degree recipients from the nine community colleges of the City University of New York (CUNY).[8] While the focus on graduates does not permit generalization about the effectiveness of remediation for all enrolled students, the study clearly illuminates the role of remediation among those "successful" students who persist to receive the degree. The study found that:

- o 68% of associate degree recipients had completed at least one remedial course, and 17% had completed four or more courses;

- o 81% of degree recipients took more than four semesters to complete a degree; but a regression analysis revealed that economic factors, not academic problems, accounted for by far the greatest amount of "excess time" to the degree.

The study summarizes this part of the findings as follows:

> "Many graduates began their undergraduate studies with poor academic preparation; this deficiency resulted in the addition to their program of significant amounts of remedial coursework. Remediation slows students down on the path to graduation by reducing the ratio between course enrollments and actual degree credits. However, this pattern as documented in the regressions only tells us a small fraction about student careers. By contrast, the employment factor tells us a great deal: students who work tend to enroll consistently on a part-time basis and, as a result, take a much longer time to complete their degrees. Thus, though academic factors surely play a role, the primary influence on graduation rates at CUNY is the economic character of of the undergraduate population."

Among the California community colleges, evaluation of remedial programs has increased significantly in the past two years, but is still in its infancy. Nevertheless, favorable findings predominate in the early studies. For example, the Learning Assessment Retention Consortium reports the following overall findings from its review of recent evaluations conducted at individual colleges:

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- The semester retention rate is as great for remedial students as it is for students enrolled in Associate Degree level transfer courses.

- Average skill growth in reading, writing and mathematics is, at minimum, twice that expected in a semester and can be as great as four times the expected skill growth in that period.

- After taking remedial courses, students report a major increase in self confidence needed to complete college programs.

- The majority of students enrolled in remedial programs are enrolled in an average of five to six additional units in non basic skills classes.[9]

Further examples of findings from individual colleges include the following:

San Joaquin Delta College's Spring 1985 evalution of its Basic Skills Program found that:

a) Skill growth in reading for one semester showed an average gain of 1.1 years in comprehension to 3.3 years in structural analysis.

b) Skill growth in math for one semester showed an average gain of 3.3 years in computations and 4.0 years in applications.

c) Sixty to seventy-five percent of basic skills students enrolled in 5 to 6 units of non basic skills classes and earned an average GPA in those classes of 2.25.[10]

Santa Barbara City College retrospectively reviewed the transcripts of the 207 SBCC students who transferred to UC Santa Barbara in Fall 1984 and found that:

a) Ninety-eight (47%) had completed at least one developmental or remedial class while at SBCC;

b) The number of developmental or remedial classes taken at SBCC before transfer ranged from 1 to 11, with 91% of the students having enrolled in from 1 to 3 classes.[11]

These findings, while by no means providing conclusive proof of the efficacy of remedial programs, do indicate that students who exhibit skill deficiencies at entrance can make significant skill gains, can achieve success in regular community college

offerings and can even earn degrees and transfer to the University of California. Perhaps more important, the facts that the vast majority of remedial students are high school graduates and that disproporationate numbers of them are from ethnic minority backgrounds suggest that if the Board wishes to further delimit the provision of remedial offerings in the colleges, it would do well to consider means other than restricting admission to the institutions.

2. Conditional Access to Programs

The Education Code (Section 76000) specifies that colleges shall admit high school graduates and may, at the discretion of the local boards, admit others 18 years of age or older "...who are capable of profiting from the instruction offered." Thus, "conditional access" to college programs has long been a legal option available to districts, at least as regards non-high school graduates. For the most part, though, districts have not exercised that option and, in fact, the State's long-standing commitment to and particular interpretation of "equal educational opportunity" has caused that provision to be viewed as all but anachronistic.

Beyond this legal basis for conditional access, though, it can be argued that there is an educational policy basis as well, as it pertains to remediation in relation to the colleges' degree and certificate courses.

As stated earlier, Premises 2 and 3 of the staff's proposal temper the commitment to "full" open access to the institution by declaring that access to degree and certificate programs ought to be conditional upon: a) the possession of skills requisite to successful performance, or b) the ability to attain those skills within some reasonable resource limits. The resource limits, in turn, are established by placing highest priority, in resource use, on students who consistently progress toward attainment of the colleges' major educational functions. Remediation, then, while critical to maintaining open access and equal opportunity, is ancillary to the degree and certificate courses and programs, and some limit should be placed on the resources a given student can use at the remedial levels to achieve eligibility for degree and certificate courses. This concept is not unlike the rationales underlying previous Board actions.

Although the term "conditional access" has not been used explicitly in previous Board documents and agenda items, virtually all of the Board's actions in the past several years that have been directed toward maintaining educational quality and student achievement standards may be seen as having been implicitly grounded in that concept.

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The uniform grading policies and academic progress, probation and dismissal standards, adopted in 1982, made access to continued enrollment conditional upon successful prior achievement. The adoption, in 1983, of minimum graduation competencies in reading, writing and computation made access to the associate degree conditional upon the demonstrated attainment of those competencies. The delineation, in 1985, of standards for degree-applicable and non-degree applicable courses further assured that attainment of the degree would be conditional upon successful completion of work that is truly collegiate-level in rigor. And, in ways that are most clearly consistent with the current proposal, the approval, in 1984, of the student matriculation plan indicated that colleges should make advisement or placement in courses conditional upon the student's assessed ability to succeed in them.

What is proposed in the recommendations which follow is that the Board explicitly re-affirm its commitments that colleges should provide:

- o Open access to all adults who can profit from instruction; and

- o Conditional access to degree and certificate courses and programs, based upon possession of skills requisite to success, or the ability to attain those skills within reasonable resource limitations.

B. The Proposal

Resolution: The Chancellor recommends that Board of Governors approve in concept each of the recommendations below, including one option in Recommendation 2, and direct staff to conduct necessary consultation and analyze the implications of these recommendations so that more specific proposals can be brought back for the Board's consideration early in 1986.

Recommendation 1: Community colleges should continue to be regarded in state policy as the primary postsecondary providers of remedial instruction and services in a setting where:

a) the remedial instruction offered is designed solely for the purpose of raising students' language and computational skills to the levels required for success in college degree and certificate courses;

b) there is mandatory assessment of students' skills at entrance;

c) there is placement in degree- and certificate-level courses, based upon prerequisite skill levels required for success;

d) there are adequate resources to monitor student progress and provide necessary follow-up support services; and

e) there is opportunity for concurrent enrollment in remedial courses and non-remedial courses which do not have prerequisite skill requirements.

Recommendation 2:

Option A: Students who do not initially meet skill prerequisite standards for degree-applicable college courses may accumulate up to a maximum of 30 semester units (45 quarter units) of non-degree applicable credit in remedial courses to meet the standard. Students who fail to meet this satisfactory progress standard will be dismissed, with referral to continued remediation in adult schools when appropriate.

Option B: Amend "Standards of Scholarship" regulations (Title 5, Chapter 9, Sections 55754-55756) and any other necessary regulations to make more rigorous the probation and dismissal standards for students enrolled in all courses, including remediation. Specifically: 1) require that students who have attempted at least 12 semester units or 18 quarter units shall be placed on probation if the student has earned a cumulative grade point average below 2.0 and/or has failed to complete more than 50% of the units attempted; and 2) require that students on probation be dismissed if they failed to earn a grade point average of 2.0 in each of two consecutive semesters (three quarters) and/or fail to complete at least 75% of the units attempted in each of two consecutive semesters (three quarters).

Recommendation 3: Community colleges should provide for the full range of remedial instruction needed to correct the skill deficiencies exhibited by students who enroll. They may, by a formalized mutual agreement process, contract with adult schools to provide some part of the remediation program. The mutual agreement/contract process would require formal articulation of curricula and standards of course conduct to insure a smooth student flow between segments. Under either of the options in Recommendation 2, units attempted in the articulated adult school courses would be included in calculating probation and dismissal standards.

Recommendation 4: The Board should reiterate its earlier call for a joint, comparative study of remediation that is offered in the credit mode in community colleges and remediation that is offered in adult, noncredit programs under the auspices of high school and community college districts. The study should consider both the effectiveness of the courses and the purposes or objectives for which they are taught. It should offer recommendations concerning the proper delineation of the roles of non-degree applicable credit remediation and noncredit remediation, taking into consideration such other policy issues as the role of financial aid eligibility requirements and the importance of related student support services.

C. Discussion of the Proposed Resolution

The language of staff's proposed resolution for Board action -- that is, that the Board "approve in concept" the four recommendations and act later on specific implementation strategies -- is intended to provide the Board opportunity to establish immediately a clear policy direction in this area but leave open for further elaboration and discussion the several implementation issues that have been raised in developing the proposal thus far. For while staff views the proposal as internally consistent and generally consistent with other Board policies, there remain a number of assumptions, conditions and questions which require further exploration by staff, review and comment by the field and deliberation by the Board. Some of these are listed below and the Board is encouraged to seek clarification from or give direction to staff regarding all of them.

D. Partial List of Implementation Issues

1. There is currently considerable diversity among the districts regarding the amounts, levels, and types of remediation offered in the "non-degree-applicable credit" and noncredit modes. How much narrowing of that diversity will be required, in implementing the current proposal, in order to maintain equal educational opportunity across districts?

2. The proposal assumes that districts will implement full assessment at entrance and have the capacity to systematically establish course pre-requisites related to assessment, monitor student progress and provide follow-up services for students who need them. The Board is seeking funds to accomplish these things in its request for inclusion of matriculation in the Governor's Budget. How much of the proposal can be implemented without new resources? What are the risks to equal access or to the integrity of the proposal that would be taken if it were to be implemented without sufficient new resources?

3. The proposal assumes sufficient similarity among districts in the selection and use of assessment instruments and in the establishing of pre-requisites for courses and related policies to avoid problems of equal educational opportunity for students across districts. How much similarity does that require? Is there need for a uniform, statewide assessment battery? Is there need for a single systemwide methodology for establishing pre-requisites?

4. Concerning the options in Recommendation 2:

   a) The thirty (30) unit limit is consistent with the total number of eligibility units currently permitted under federal financial aid regulations. Is it otherwise consistent with these regulations? Is it too high or too low in

relation to the varying amounts or types of remedial curricula offered by the colleges? Too high or low in relation to the ability of various groups of students to attain college level skills? How would colleges that arrange for remediation to be provided in noncredit monitor and enforce the limit?

b) Which option is more likely to result in resources being directed toward successful students? Will unsuccessful students remain enrolled merely to "use up" their units of eligibility? Under the progress option, are the unit limits, term limits and/or non-completion ratios too strict? Too lenient?

5. Concerning the articulation/delineation agreements referred to in Recommendation 3:

a) What are the minimum requirements? Who establishes them?

b) What are the roles and responsibilities of the boards of the respective segments at the local level? The state level?

These are a few of the issues that need to be addressed by staff in developing implementation proposals for the Board. There is also need for thorough consultation with the colleges prior to final Board action.

FOOTNOTES

1. All postsecondary segments hold that ESL should not normally be regarded as remedial; but community colleges have acknowledged that some levels of and/or purposes for ESL instruction should probably not be applicable to degrees. Staff is currently working with advisory groups to identify and classify such offerings.

2. U. S. Department of Education. "Many College Students Take Remedial Courses," in Bulletin of the National Center for Education Statistics, Washington, D.C., September 1985.

3. The enrollment numbers in Table 1a are projected statewide from the actual Fall 1984 enrollments in an 11-college representative sample. The percents in the table are calculated on the base enrollment figure of all "first-time students" (i.e., new freshmen and first-time transfers) in order to simplify understanding of the distribution of enrollments across instructional levels. In fact, students other than first-time students are included in the enrollment numbers; conversely, many first-time students are not enrolled in a math or English course. These same enrollments, as percents of other base figures, are shown on Table 1b.

4. Lewis, Merilee et al. "Performance of SJDC Freshmen in Reading, Writing and Math by Ethnicity, High School Status and Age." San Joaquin Delta College, Stockton, CA, October 1985. (Unpublished)

5. San Francisco Community College District. Testimony Presented to the Joint Legislative Committee to Review the Master Plan. San Francisco, October 1985. (Unpublished)

6. Hythold, Valerie. "LARC Response to the Master Plan Commission" (Memo). Sacramento City College, Sacramento, CA, October 1985.

7. Kulik et al. "College Programs for High Risk and Disadvantaged Students: A Meta-Analysis." Review of Educational Research: Fall 1983, Vol. 53, No. 3., pp. 397-414.

8. Kaufman, Barry et al. Outcomes of Educational Opportunity. City University of New York, NYC, October 1981.

9. Learning Assessment Retention Consortium. "Community Colleges as Providers of Remediation." Field Draft. Sacramento City College, October 1985.

10. Lewis et al., op. cit.

11. Cohen, Elaine. "Evaluation of College Remedial Programs: A Retrospective Study." Santa Barbara City College, Spring 1985. (Unpublished)

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